



UDOT wants drivers to plan ahead, 'trip chain'

Genelle Pugmire - Daily Herald | Posted: Monday, May 31, 2010 12:35 am

With daytime closures starting this week on Interstate 15 in Utah County, local travelers that use the freeway to get around the county for short trips are being encouraged to "trip chain."

Trip chaining basically means you are linking all of your errands together in one drive, rather than in many different trips.

"If you go out on errands, we encourage drivers to put their errands together and go out only one time," said Heather Barnum, UDOT spokeswoman. "We need to have people look at strategies and ways of getting around on surface roads."

What UDOT is suggesting is that if you usually use the freeway throughout the day or even over a few days or a week, to plan ahead and put all your errands into one drive. This will alleviate extra traffic on I-15 and will help move the rest of the traffic at a quicker pace. There will be up to 20-minute delays, particularly during peak travel times, and with fewer vehicles those peaks won't be as bad.

"One of our challenges is that I-15 is Utah County's main street," Barnum said. "Drivers jump on and off the freeway."

One location that will be noticeably different is the southbound exit lane between 1600 North and 800 North in Orem. Beginning this week the entry/exit lane (and eventually others) will be reconfigured to become a staging area for equipment and supplies as well as be widened. It will be closed for the duration of the project. Residents who use the on- and off-ramps will be required to make quicker merges from the entrance and exit lane.

"It will be a natural flow but does merge faster than people may be used to," Barnum said.

In another move to help traffic stay in a normal flow, Utah Highway Patrol is advising individuals involved in all non-injury accidents, where the vehicles are drivable, to exit the freeway, stay together and then call UHP for officer response.

"Being on the freeway could cause a potential hazard, and we want people to be safe," said Cameron Roden, UHP spokesman. "We need people to particularly move if they can in areas where there is no shoulder area."

Of course, if the accident is serious, UHP officers will respond on the freeway as soon as possible, Roden said.

Barnum said that residents should be keenly aware of speed limits that will be reduced to 55 mph at several areas along the Utah County corridor, particularly at the S-curve between Orem and Provo.

"People have already started making a difference with their wise driving choices," Barnum said. "We have already seen a reduction of use on the freeway of about 18 to 20 percent. We need to all help each other through this construction."

Barnum encourages locals to trip chain, plan ahead and figure out things they can do to cope during this construction. Here is what will be happening in June: reduced speeds, bridge work and bridge demolition in American Fork and Spanish Fork.

Other areas of interest under construction:

- General nighttime lane restrictions are possible from 9 p.m. to 5:30 a.m., Monday through Thursday and 10 p.m. Friday to 7:30 a.m., Saturday.
- No construction activities will be underway during the Memorial Day weekend. All lanes will remain open through 9 p.m. on Tuesday. Existing areas of narrowed lanes, reduced speeds, lane shifts and narrowed shoulders will remain in place. Drivers are encouraged to use extra caution through these areas.
- Avoid the congestion of holiday travel by traveling at off-commute times or "Stay an Extra Day." Look for the ticket symbol on the udot.utah.gov website for more information.
- I-15 will be reduced to three lanes in each direction between 1600 North and 800 North in Orem while crews remove the median barrier and reconstruct the median area.
- Clearing of trees and debris continues between University Parkway and 1600 North as crews prepare for I-15 widening.
- Crews continue installing traffic sensors at 17 intersections along U.S. Highway 89 (State Street), University Parkway, 1600 North and 1200 West in Orem and along Center Street and 500 West in Provo. Work is being performed at night. Construction schedules are subject to change due to situations such as inclement weather, equipment problems, construction delays or other emergencies.